

# South Dakota National Guard

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **More than half of SD Guard's full-time force to endure furloughs**

For 540 full-time employees of the South Dakota National Guard, the furloughs being enacted by the government sequester will take full effect on Aug. 2. The number represents 56 percent of the South Dakota Guards 958 full-time employees and they are among 48,300 Guard employees nationally who are affected by the furloughs being triggered by sequestration.

Known as dual-status military technicians, these Guard members are full-time federal employees and members of the units they serve. Their jobs are to organize, administer and train Soldiers and Airmen and to maintain critical equipment across the state so units are ready for prompt mobilization in times of war or state emergencies.

"I am very concerned about the impact to our troops and to the readiness of our units," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the SDNG. "This amounts to a 20 percent cut in pay for much of our full-time force, which has and will continue to ensure the Guard is ready to respond to the needs of our state and nation."

In order to keep the National Guard ready on a daily basis, it's these employees that are critical to sustaining the units until the traditional Guard members come in on a drill weekend. They take care of training requirements, operate airplanes, maintain vehicles and aircraft, take care of finances and payroll, and coordinate logistics, supplies and equipment.

As a result of the 2011 deal that reduced the federal budget by about \$1.1 trillion over the next 10 years, the furloughs will require these employees to take 11 unpaid days off between Aug. 2 and Sept. 30. The furloughs are to help chip away at the federal budget deficit.

Of the SDNG's full-time force, 370 Soldiers and Airmen will not be impacted by the furloughs. When the cuts were announced, President Barack Obama said that the uniformed services wouldn't be cut – which these Guard members are protected under. They were hired under a separate program called Active Guard Reserve (AGR), which is not covered by the sequester. Also not affected by the furlough are traditional Guard service members, who drill one weekend a month and two weeks a year.

But the dual-status military technicians, who are hired under federal guidelines, fall into a gray area. In May, it was announced that the Guard members would be furloughed.

While both dual-status military technicians and AGR members perform the same or similar duties, their pay and benefits are different. Technicians are the only uniform-wearing military members who are being affected by the furlough and will give up more than a month's pay in lost wages.

According to Col. Terry Ommen, the state's human resource officer, this equates to a loss in pay of nearly \$4,200 for every technician impacted by the furlough.

While the SDNG has deployed nearly 7,000 Soldiers and Airmen during the last decade to Middle East, and have more than 400 Soldiers and Airmen currently serving in combat, the National Guard Association, which represents retired Guard members and lobbies on issues affecting the Guard, is taking the fight to Capitol Hill. The group is supporting a bill by Rep. Steven Palazzo, R-Miss., who serves in the Mississippi National Guard, that would exempt dual-status technicians from furloughs.

Palazzo introduced the bill in March. It has picked up 47 co-sponsors from both parties, but so far it hasn't gotten out of the House Budget Committee.

"There is no question whatsoever that these furloughs will negatively impact the readiness of our units and will create a significant hardship on the household budgets of hundreds of hard-working and dedicated employees among our ranks," said Reisch. "I absolutely understand the need for our country to get its fiscal house in order. I just don't think doing so should target the livelihood of our men and women in uniform."

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